



**U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement**

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News Release

ICE returns \$4,600 to 90-year-old scam victim

BOWLING GREEN, Ky. — U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) special agents here yesterday returned \$4,632 to an elderly woman who had been bilked of the money by telemarketing con artists operating from Canada.

The victim's money was recovered by Project COLT, a bi-national, multi-agency joint initiative targeting telemarketing fraud. Project COLT includes: ICE, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the FBI, and the U.S. Postal Service Inspection Service, among other law enforcement and government agencies.

The 90-year-old Bowling Green victim said she did not recall the specifics of the scam that led to her losing the money. Typically, telemarketer con artists posing as attorneys or government officials telephone their victims and convince them that have won the Canadian lottery. The con artists then instruct the victim to send money to cover the insurance and taxes on the lottery winnings before the money is released.

Michael Misiuta, resident agent in charge for the ICE office in Bowling Green, warned Kentucky residents to be vigilant about such scams, which have already bilked people in the United States — especially senior citizens — out of tens of millions of dollars.

“These sophisticated con artists appear trustworthy to their elderly victims who aren’t used to such deceitful tactics,” said Misiuta. “This woman was fortunate in getting some of her money back, but the sad truth is that most people simply lose it. ICE will do everything it can to stop this criminal enterprise, but the first line of defense is for people to grip their wallets and purses tightly whenever someone calls asking for money.”

Telemarketing fraud, which primarily targets elderly victims in the United States, has resulted in the loss of tens of millions of dollars by people who are least able to recover from financial loss. Victims often lose their entire life savings. Fraudulent telemarketers represent themselves to victims as lawyers, government officials, police officers, accountants or lottery company officials. The victims are told that they will receive a sum of money varying from thousands to millions of dollars in lottery winnings.

The focus of Project COLT is to identify, disrupt and dismantle telemarketing fraud operations. Project COLT consists of law enforcement officers who intercept funds (usually bank drafts and cashiers' checks), so they can be recovered and ultimately returned to victims. These officers also work to prevent further victimization both through public education, and by prosecuting those who commit fraud.

Project COLT members also have formed partnerships with Canada Customs and Revenue, Canada Post Corporation, Federal Express, Purolator, United Parcel Service, DHL and other companies to assist with fund interception and return.

To report suspicious telemarketing activity, members of the public can contact Canada's Reporting Economic Crime On-Line (RECOL) hotline at 888-495-8501, or visit www.recol.ca for more information.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of four integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.